The Tribune Institute

In the World of Women

THIS WOMAN'S BUSINESS IS WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

By ALISSA FRANC

She Is a City Inspector Because Shopping Is Primarily a Woman's Job

Every Day She Goes Her Rounds, Reweighing or Remeasuring Goods, to the Satisfaction of Honest Tradesmen as Well as Shoppers

ONCE upon a time, not many moons ago, I was introduced to a slim, fair-haired young woman,—very pretty; in fact, one's exact conception of the type of girl who has never left her mother's lavender-scented home. I talked with her for a time upon subjects suited to her apparent youth and inexperience of life—only to discover in the midst of the conversation that she was a government inspector of weights and measures.

An inspector of weights and measures! Which of us would not imagine that such officialdom invariably would be impersonated by a burly male being of fierce demeanor and authoritative outlook.

I was interested to know what the work of this unofficial looking young person could possibly be, so I asked her to let me go with her on a day's round of inspection. Permission from Commissioner Hartigan duly obtained, we sallied forth—I blindly following the fashionably clad, demure figure of Miss Rhea McCormick.

First into a grocery store on Sixth Avenue we passed, and just like real shoppers we entered.

"How much is your best coffee?" my little friend courteously asked.

"Twenty-one cents a pound."

"Give me a pound," she replied, "and a pound of your best butter." Several items were added. The supposed purchase finished, the grocer was asked to total up. Then my soft-voiced young friend's demeanor suddenly changed. She whisked the grocer to one side, deftly took out a weight from her silver handbag and in the tone of officialdom uttered the mysterious words, "Scale inspector."

She reweighed the goods with her own weights, examined the scale, announced all was well and gave the grocer a certificate concerning the whole transaction, so that should he ever be accused of giving wrong weight this would stand in his favor.

From shop to shop did we wander through the Italian quarter, always making purchases that we never took with us, thrusting aside the red-faced, smiling tradesmen to reweigh his goods—and not once did we receive anything but perfect courtesy after so doing.

These men were perfectly satisfied that the scale inspector should exist and make her daily round—did she not protect them from unfair competition from their neighboring shopkeepers? She evidently represented a type of vigilance to which they were accustomed, and once again I was amazed to discover the excellent terms of friendliness that exist between officialdom and the public in this city.

Of course, much of the harmony was due to the tact, courage and businesslike bearing of the inspector! Had she allowed herself to be hoodwinked or shown any dread of possible impertinence, her task would not have been an easy one.

It was not difficult to see why women had been appointed for such a job. Commissioner Hartigan's common sense had told him that a woman is more at home in a store than a man, and shopping for the household always has been and always will be more of a woman's job than a man's.

But hardly ever does she catch the small shopkeeper.

Six years ago, when Miss McCormick first began the work, conditions were very different. The number of dishonest tradesmen averaged very high. But since these regular shop-to-shop investigations of weights and measures a great light has shown them the wisest course to pursue.

Non-English-speaking foreigners are always difficult to deal with, not so much that they wish to defraud, as that they seem to have no conception of exact weight as such. If, for instance, one asks such a man for a bushel of coal, his reply will often be, "A large or a small bushel?"—meaning a big or little measure of the coal.

But the inspector's job is not always as easy and simple as this.

For instance, the Jewellers' Board of Trade has been working in conjunction with the Bureau of Weights and Measures to discover frauds in karat and weight in the jewelry sold to the public—which is often by no means that which it is represented to be.

How many of us in the happy days of our pending nuptials will stop to think whether or not we are getting in the shape of a wedding ring full value for the money we pay?

So one day Mr. Thomas F. Morgan, supervising inspector of the Bureau of Weights and Measures, dressed up in his very best clothes and took Miss McCormick, in the most bride-like attire she possessed, to purchase "the" ring.

"At first I refused to go," said Miss McCormick. "He was dressed up so that I was ashamed to cross the street with him."

However, to a certain store they wandered, after reading a sign at the window of the shop to the effect that its owner would sell 14-karat solid gold wedding rings for $3.75.

Mr. Morgan, Miss McCormick asserts, was in his element. He insisted on telling the sympathetic saleslady that he had waited five years for her to say "yes," and only last night had she consented. And now he would not allow her out of his sight for fear she should change her mind, and so he wanted a wedding ring, the purchase of which he deemed almost as binding as a visit to the Mayor's office.

These Men Are Perfectly Satisfied That the Scale Inspector Should Exist and Make Her Daily Round — Does She Not Protect Them from Unfair Competition on the Part of Neighboring Shopkeepers?

Testing a Yard Measure to Make Sure That Women Whose Pennies Are Few Get What They Pay For

Didn't the saleslady think so? The saleslady did think so, enthusiastically and at length, without any regard whatsoever for the feelings of poor Miss McCormick, who tried in vain to keep a straight face.

Mr. Morgan asked for one of the wedding rings which were on display at the window. A tray lying near the counter was brought and a selection was made, after it had been asserted that these were identical with the rings on display at the window.

Mr. Morgan asked the saleslady if the rings really were 14 karat. He was informed that they were "14 krt 1/10"—this being the mark on them.

Next the inspector asked the meaning of "1/10."

"One-tenth was other metal," he was told.

Miss McCormick discovered that this was not sufficient explanation for her, and with an air of bride-like innocence proceeded to ask for further details. Smilingly, she was informed that nine-tenths of the ring was 14 karat solid gold and the other one-tenth of base metal. And she was "stupid" enough to have this repeated several times.

The ring was purchased, and Miss McCormick and Mr. Morgan left the shop to give the ring into the hands of the United States Assay Office. When assayed, the ring showed a fineness of 52/100, which is equivalent to 1.25/100 karats. The remainder of the ring proved to be brass and alloy.

The jeweller tried to defend himself, in spite of the emphatic statements of the woman in the shop to the effect that 14 krt 1/10 was intended to mean that nine-tenths of the ring was 14 karat gold. But the magistrate maintained that his personal opinion was that such marking of jewelry was calculated to deceive the public.

"They are trying to bunco the public into something that was not as represented," was his verdict.

So, too, one fine day Miss McCormick and Mr. Morgan dressed as a motorman and his wife. They passed a certain pawnbroker's shop and saw displayed in the window a woman's bracelet, marked "$12—Solid Gold."

Mr. Morgan asked to see the bracelet. There were several people in the store at the time, and the young daughter of the owner of the shop was requested to wait on the couple.

The girl took the bracelet out of the shop window and, after much parley back and forth, Mr. Morgan bought the bracelet, receiving a written guarantee which read, "A solid gold bracelet, 14 Kt., for $12." This guarantee bore the printed signature of the vender and a large red seal.

The Assay Office, however, proved that the bracelet was 5.37 karat. The pawnbroker pleaded guilty, and received suspended sentence.

Not always are cases so easy to catch.

So did a certain colleague of Miss McCormick have great trouble regarding a coal dealer. The bureau had had several complaints that a certain company was delivering short weight.

The coal was delivered in bags, each weighing 100 pounds. The usual procedure in coal deliveries is to reweigh the coal, once it has left the coal yard, as follows: The inspector, on seeing the coal wagon draw up to the house, takes the man and his load to reweigh on an official scale—gross.

Then he allows the man to deliver his load, reweighing the man and his wagon on the same official scale, thus by subtraction getting the tare weight of the quantity delivered. In this particular instance, however, the inspector knew that his man was too wily for such a deal. So he had a scale placed in the cellar and went down there himself, giving out that he wanted to look over one of the bins.

When the man had finished unloading the inspector shouted: "Finished?"

The man called back: "Yes."

"Got the whole ton in?" again asked the inspector.

"Yes, the whole ton," repeated the man.

"Very well," commented the inspector, and proceeded to make preparations for reweighing.

"Stop," called the man, on seeing this, "I have a few more bags under the seat."

The secret was out. The man had been hiding under the seat of his wagon with each delivery several bags. Had the inspector reweighed in the usual manner, deducting the tare from the gross, the fraud would again have gone undiscovered.

"It must be borne in mind that the inspectors must always think quicker than cheats, and sometimes it is hard work," said my companion.

So, too, in the case of a butcher who was known to be a cheat, but who somehow could never be caught. One of the inspectors pretended to be extremely intoxicated while buying a large-sized turkey. This was too much of a temptation for the butcher and he underweighed by two pounds.

Never was butcher in such a rage as this one when he discovered that his purchaser was really very sober indeed.

Thus did my day's journey leave me musing. When we make our annual balance sheet and discover the sum against taxes,—which invariably fills us with dismay,—let us realize that we are getting something very definite and personal for our money. When we think of the honest tradesman being specially grown for us, and the amount we could be cheated out of each day if it were not for this steady policing, the work seems well worth the money.

For how many of us pause to add and multiply and watch carefully when making our regular rounds of shopping?—to say nothing of those who serenely telephone the daily order without making any attempt to watch what they receive in return for the money they will be called upon to pay.

HOW SCHOOLGIRLS ARE BEING TRAINED TO FIGHT OLD H. C. OF L.

By MARY GRAHAM BONNER

PUBLIC SCHOOL 45 is a vocational school. It is known, perhaps, better than any other in the city because of the Gary experimentations which have been tried there. We may or we may not be in favor of Gary schools. They often sound a bit wild, to be sure. But somehow I am strongly in favor of P. S. 45, not because of its Gary theories, but because of the practical demonstration of results which I have seen in this school.

Among the other vocations offered there is a course in domestic science. It is divided into three terms in the school year, with different girls taking instruction in the different terms. And it was to see the working of this class from the first of the morning until some time after the luncheon hour that I last visited the school.

Up many stairs, through doors, and I was in a large room with gas stoves lining the walls, electric dish washers, electric towel washers, pans, crockery, sinks—everything pertaining to a kitchen. There were tables with empty trays and dishes being prepared for them. There was a cash register, and high on the wall a menu of the day's meal.

WHERE HOUSEWORK IS INTERESTING

Everything like a kitchen—yes—in one way. But in another vastly different. Here was none of the look of the drudgery of cooking, cleaning, washing, toiling. Here were happy children occupied with turning queer vegetables and raw meat, sugar, flour and butter into delicious hot meats, salads, vegetables, cake, puddings, cocoa.

Here was a new attitude toward cooking. It was something interesting. They enjoyed it!

During the first period in the morning of the domestic science class—and there let it be said that the work is for different girls of the class at different hours, so that their school work is uninterrupted—there is a class in practical theory. The girls learn economy, management, practical points so necessary to their future.

Girls are sent out in the morning to do the marketing for the day. They buy the perishable things at this time, such as lettuce, milk; while in the afternoon other girls go for the lasting things, such as cans of tomatoes, spaghetti. The girl who buys the most wisely is given the highest mark.

They are all intrusted with the care of money. They are taught to pay for everything as they go. Then the day's expenditures can so much more easily be checked. They are taught the difference between good, crisp lettuce and lettuce that is soft, old. A practical woman, who is employed to take care of some of the final cleaning up in the afternoon shows this side of housekeeping.

PRACTICAL LESSONS IN MARKETING

All the girls are marked for ability in shopping. The volunteer waitresses receive five cents a day for their work. One small girl who has been an efficient waitress since September confided to me that she purchased all her Christmas presents last year with her own earnings—and she had given lovely presents!

But the children were returning from their marketing. Taking off hats and coats, they were showing the teacher, Miss Allen, what they had bought.

They know of the high cost of living. They know that more than ever before they must think before they buy. Just because they are buying potatoes it must not mean that they must be indifferent to the looks of potatoes—for if they learn how to buy potatoes well will they not have more money for the rainy day?

The children in the kitchen wear white caps and white aprons. Attached to each girl's apron is her own towel. She is immaculate—for is not that necessary to cooking? Perhaps it was not so understood in the dear mother's or grandmother's day, back in Italy (for this is largely an Italian neighborhood), but the little girls know how much this idea of cleanliness will help the Board of Health and assist in the fight against germs!

LUNCHEON FOR THE SCHOOL.

And how they are working! The girls are keenly absorbed in the culinary experiments Little arms with long spoons are stirring, stirring. Meals to be made for over one hundred people! No wonder the little chefs are busy. No wonder they feel responsibility. No wonder there is a thrill in feeling that they are turning out a restaurant luncheon.

The menus for the day had arrived from the print shop downstairs. P. S. 45 can look after itself! And the account sheets for the day and week that each child in the theory class keeps and hands in weekly are printed by the school boys.

Luncheon was ready. The first group was arriving. There were about one hundred and twenty-five children ready to eat in the school. Had it been a rainy day, I was told, there would have been double that number. On the rainy days the cooks are even busier.

Luncheon is always served in two periods. And such a luncheon as they had prepared! Cream of celery soup, braised beef, brown potatoes and gravy—luscious gravy. There were creamed onions, spaghetti with tomatoes and cheese. Potato and celery salad, or lettuce with mayonnaise dressing. Cabinet pudding and lemon layer cake. Coffee, cocoa, milk and tea were to be had, and rolls—the last item the only part of the luncheon not made by the children of the domestic science class.

And at the end of the first period for luncheon half of the little hungry people had had their noon meal—an excellent one for ten cents—sometimes for more, and sometimes for as little as five cents, when they had brought sandwiches from home and only wanted hot soup.

The second period for luncheon had commenced. The teachers were served by the volunteer waitresses, and a mite took our quite large and complicated order with accurate efficiency and brought back trays filled just as we had requested.

DIPLOMACY AND DISH-WASHING

Then came the dull part of the course! "Diplomacy," said Miss Allen, "is what we must use here. No one enjoys dish-washing and cleaning up. But by changing the girls' routine from week to week, giving each different tasks for the different weeks, everything is divided equally and they all come to realize that there must always be some drudgery in every work. Now they do not mind it. Cooking is such fun; shopping is interesting. To pick out a good head of lettuce is as important to them as to pick out a hair ribbon or a scarf."

There are the electric dish washers which do the countless plates. The "practical woman" stands over this end of the work. Then comes the dish-drying. Each child gets her pan ready for the clean dishes and sets to work to put things to rights.

One small girl presses the cash register with might and main, and gets the slips in readiness for Mrs. Wagner, who has a period at this time of accounts, expenditures, credits, and the copying of recipes. "You see," she said, "other schools are going to try to have their own lunch rooms and domestic science courses. We are sending them some of our recipes. The girls are copying them before they go to the print shop."

"The print shop of the school?" I asked doubtfully.

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "Everything is done by our own children."

Others have gone shopping for the morrow's meal, while some are cooking again, making cakes, mixing, beating, stirring and baking delectable dishes.

It was all so efficiently done, I thought to myself, and the food seemed dainty and expensive. Some one must be at the back of this. The money spent for luncheons by the children could surely not pay for all.

Perhaps some enthusiast was helping the school in this branch of work. Some rich man, maybe, who was glad to see that a radical school was still teaching girls to cook and pay for what they got. He might have been so relieved to hear there were women being brought up who would not "charge and send."

"I want to ask some questions," I ventured.

"Yes," Mrs. Wagner replied. "I would be glad to tell you anything. These children are such a help to their parents. The mothers are delighted with the course. To stay at home and make a cake is a joy now—not a hardship for them. They are proud of what they learn, and they help their mothers to buy."

"The luncheon was delicious," I said. "But it must be a great expense to have so much for such little money. Is this kept up largely by contributions?"

THE WORK SUPPORTS ITSELF

Mrs. Wagner looked slightly hurt, then surprised, then she laughed.

"We more than meet expenses, ourselves," she said. "We have accumulative profits now of about $250, for the school season thus far. We make about $8 a week despite the high cost of living. We have not had to raise any of our prices for food, even though we are paying more for provisions.

"It has been systematized—that is the answer. We have studied how to buy, how to cook, how to watch the daily accounts. Before we could make more, perhaps, but as long as we are ahead we shall not raise our prices. A child spends, upon an average, ten cents a day. We pay for our food, and for the "practical woman" who does so much of the paring of vegetables, cleaning; we pay for our little waitresses and for a great deal of our equipment. We have had no new equipment from the Board of Education for a year and a half. We bought a good many extra things in September—we paid for them, and we are still a little ahead."

"What about the breakage of dishes?" I asked as three fell from a tray to the floor with a crash.

"We pay for them, too," she laughed. "That comes out of the general losses. You see our rooms are not complete. When the new annex is finished we shall have more adequate means of looking after dishes. Now the children have to put their pans on the floor, and there is no special way they can come in or go out for the location of stoves, sinks, tables is not yet as efficiently arranged as we would like.

"And in our new annex," continued Mrs. Wagner, "we are to have a suite of rooms. The children will be taught housekeeping, too."

AN OLD TASK DONE IN A NEW WAY

For a sample of efficiency Public School 45 in The Bronx, has a domestic science course worthy of notice. The children are taught along practical lines worthy of imitation, whether one is a student of domestic economy or a housekeeper who would like to see how others manage. The clear accounts, the business management, are worthy of attention, and the luncheon they serve is very worthy of eating and enjoying!

The domestic science course of P. S. 45 may have its theories—but of what harm are theories when they are really put to practical purposes? It is then that a theory escapes from its cell of imprisonment and actually proves to amount to something!

As Mr. Patri, the principal, said: "Aren't these children an inspiration to see? The way they can work and accomplish is daily more amazing, more gratifying."

And as I left I thought of those children in their own homes later on—cooking, not as a drudgery task, but as a work to be done well—a work as interesting as that of any man's and an important work, too!

For what is any one without good food? The answer is simple, but while it comes to our minds let us draw a grateful breath that in this whirl of new ideas and rushing, blinding experiments the biggest experimental school of all is showing how well its girls can accomplish the most old-fashioned task of woman!

HOME AS A SUMMER RESORT

STAY-AT-HOMES who regard New York as the best all-round summer resort on the continent, and country fans who hear in the chirp of the first robin an invitation to go out and dig worms for him, will both find just what they are looking for in Miss Elene Foster's new series of articles on the art of making home the most beautiful and comfortable place in the world, even in summer.

They begin next Sunday. Here is the list:

"MAKING A SUMMER HOME OF YOUR APARTMENT."
"THE POSSIBILITIES OF A CITY BACK-YARD."
"THE HANGING GARDENS OF OUR OWN BABYLON."
"MY LITTLE PLACE IN THE COUNTRY."
"WHERE HOUSE PARTIES ASSEMBLE FOR WEEK-ENDS."
"LIVING ON THE PORCH AND IN THE GARDEN."